2

# A New Constellation:

Discovered in a

# SERMON

Preached at the

# VISITATION

Held at *Leicester* the 29th of *April*,

1 6 7 4.

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BY

*JOSHUA BONHOME*,

Rector of *Saddington* in the County of

*LEICESTER*.

Chaplain in Ordinary to His MAJESTY.


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Printed by *W. G.* and are to be sold by

*Moses Pitt*, at the sign of the Angel

in St. *Paul's* Churchyard. 1675.

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TO THE RIGHT HONORABLE,

# *HENRY COVENTRY* Esq;

Of His MAJESTIES most Honorable Privy Council, and Principal Secretary of State.

Right Honorable,

I *Could not presume to present this unpolished Discourse (in it self unworthy of Your Acceptation) under the high Patronage of Your Honour, if I did not know (by undeserved Experience) that as the holy Angels of God, which though they be called Principalities and Powers, and behold continually the face of the Lord of lords and King of kings, our Heavenly Father; yet are of so generous, so noble, and so loving Condescention, that they joyfully undertake, to be Ministring Spirits to the meanest Servants of their Lord and Master, and to be Instruments in his Divine Hands, for their Comfort*

*Comfort and Deliverances: So Your Honour doth dayly imitate thoſe glorious Spirits, in doing good, with an unparallel'd Nobleneſs, to all ſuch whoſe Allegiance and Loyalty to our Soveraign is known to You; proving Your ſelf a true Imitatour of him, who though he be of all that is good the beſt, and of all that's great the greateſt, yet delights to prefer his Goodneſs before his Greatneſs.*

*All our Engliſh* Iſrael *knows, as well as my ſelf, the Eminency of the Place Your Honour enjoyeth in this Kingdom, under our Gracious Soveraign; but the Experience of Your Noble Favours to me, upon ſeveral occaſions, forceth me to conclude, this height of Truſt and Dignity becomes yet more Honourable, and deſerves to be more admired, in that You are pleaſed (and that frequently) to divert Your Eyes from the ſight and glory of the talleſt Cedars, and to impart a glance to the loweſt Shrubs; like* Solomon, *who ſpake not only of thoſe goodly Trees in* Lebanon, *but of*

*the*

*the very Hyſſop, that ſpringeth out of the Wall.*

*Sir, This poor Sermon, which I preached in the Audience of many Grave and Learned Divines, and which ſome Well-wiſhers to the Church of* England *and the Miniſtry, have thought not to be unworthy of appearing in Publick, in order to Diſabuſe many poor Souls, who by Recuſants perſwaſions, do not only lightly eſteem our Calling, but as if they were the only People of God, (and ſuch they boaſt themſelves to be) look upon it as being no better than that of the Prieſts of* Baal, *(for ſo many of them are pleaſed to call us;) and on our moſt Reverend Prelates, and the whole Clergy of this Land, as being no better (if not worſe) than the Prieſts of Antichriſt.*

*This poor Sermon, I ſay, I make bold to preſent to Your Honour, with all poſſible Reſpect, the beſt of all I can do being juſtly due, and devoted to Your Honour, as a ſmall diſcharge of my Duty, and an hearty acknowledgement of my Obligation. Be-*

*ſeeching*

*ſeeching Almighty God, long to preſerve Your Honour, (after the joy of our heart, and the breath of our noſtrils, His Moſt Excellent Majeſty,) a Friend and Supporter to all ſuch as fear God, and the King.*

*That as he hath called You by name, to be one of the Valiant men of* Iſrael, *which compaſs the Bed of our* Solomon, *he may be pleaſed to make You more and more Inſtrumental, for the good of this Land, and the Service of our Soveraign; and fill You, like* Bezaleel, *with the Spirit of God, in Wiſdom, and Underſtanding, and Knowledge, for the Service both of the Throne and Tabernacle, the State and the Church.*

*For theſe, and all other Bleſſings, Temporal and Spiritual, upon Your Noble perſon, ſhall ever pray, the meaneſt among the many thouſands that are called to the Sacred Prieſthood, and*

YOUR HONOURS

Moſt humble, moſt obedient, and moſt obliged Servant,

*JOSHUA BONHOME.*

**Revelat. *chap.* I. *verſ.* 16.**

***And he had in his right Hand ſeven Stars.***

AS God at ſundry times, and in divers manners, ſpake in time paſt unto the Fathers by the Prophets; to the end that all men might know the greatneſs and the glory, as well as the goodneſs, the mercifull, and loving kindneſs of the Lord: ſo in divers manners, and at ſundry times hath he appeared, in dreadfull and glorious Viſions unto his Servants, that they might with a better ſucceſs convince all thoſe they were ſent unto of their own Vileneſs, Rebellion, and Prophaneneſs; and (if I may ſo ſpeak) breed and plant, in their ſinfull and Heb. 1. 1.

deceitfull Hearts, a godly fear, and a holy reverence of so glorious a Majesty; and in [illegible] a true, perfect, and earnest submission, unto the words of him that commands all men, to be holy as he is Holy.

[illegible] *Moses* only, but to the whole Camp of *Israel* in the Wilderness, when Mount *Sina* was altogether on a smoak, because *the Lord*, (who
Exod. 19. 18. is a consuming Fire) *descended upon it in fire, and the whole mount quaked greatly.* Of the same nature was that of the Prophet *Esaias*, when he saw *the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up*, when *his train filled the Temple, and above it stood the Seraphims, crying one to another, Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of Hosts, the whole earth is full of his glory*, when *the posts of the door moved at the voice of him that cryed, and the house was filled with smoak.* As you may see in the first Verse of the sixth Chapter of the Prophecy of the same Prophet. And that the House of *Israel* might be convinced, and left without excuse, for their impudency, stiff-heartedness and rebellion against the Lord, then sent he to his Prophet *Ezechiel* the Vision of a Whirlwind coming out of the North, of a great Cloud, a Fire, and a Brightness; that of the likeness of four living Creatures, whose appearance was like burning Coals of Fire,

and like the appearance of diaphanous Crystal, and above the Firmament that was over their heads, was the likeness of a Throne, as the appearance of a Sapphire stone; and upon the Throne was the likeness, as the appearance of a man above upon it. And as the living God, by these fearful and amazing Representations of his Glory, would bring the Church of *Israel* to a sober consideration of the Excellency of his Word, that they might at last be perswaded and drawn to an entire and true Obedience to the same, and with more diligence and earnestness, admit and receive the Holy Instructions of his Prophets whom he had Honoured with these glorious Images and Representations of his Greatness and incomprehensible Infiniteness.

So in the days of the Gospel, wherein he hath spoken unto us by his own Son, *whom he hath appointed heir of all things, to the end we might lay apart all superfluity of naughtiness, and receive with meekness the word which is able to save our Souls*, as St. *James* speaketh, *Jam.* 1. *ver.* 21. he hath given the Church an infallible Witness, and an undoubted Proof, that though *He appeared in the form and likeness of a Servant*, yet *He was the brightness of the glory of the Father, and the express image of his person*;

Heb. 1. 2.

Phil. 2. 7.

Heb. 1. 3.

which appeared in the Miracles and Wonders that he wrought upon several occasions, but especially when in the Holy Mount of *Tabor* he received of God the Father honour and glory in his Transfiguration, a voice coming to him from the Excellent Glory, saying,

2 Pet. 2. 17. *This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.*

And to say nothing at present of the Wonders that accompanied his Death, as the renting of the Vail of the Temple, the Eclipse of the Sun, the cleaving of Rocks, the rising of the Dead, and the quaking of the Earth,

Heb. 1. when this blessed Saviour had by himself purged our Sins, and sate down on the Right Hand of the Majesty on high, his sending

Act. 2. 3. down the Holy Ghost upon his Apostles, in the appearance of Cloven Tongues, like as of Fire, and the sudden Gift of speaking many Languages, were no less powerfull, nay, more convincing Arguments, for the receiving of the Gospel, which brings and offers Salvation to all men.

But because, naturally, Man's Infidelity is such, that unless they see a special Character on those, by whom the Lord is pleased to send unto them the glad tydings of the Gospel, they will no more believe them than the *Jews* did our Saviour; therefore this blessed Redeemer, the Author and Finisher of our

Faith,

Faith, hath bestowed on his Servants the Preachers and Ministers of the Gospel, not only the inward assistance and presence of his Spirit, but also glorious and honourable Titles, that those as are to be led by them into the ways of Truth, may with a more cheerfull spontaneity, suffer themselves to be presented (by their Ministry) Holy, and unblameable, and unreprovable in his sight. Col. 1. 22.

Of which glorious Titles, as well as of the speciall care he hath of his Servants, the Ministers of his Holy Word and Sacraments, you have an excellent Proof, and Warrant together, in the words of my Text; wherein you see the *Alpha* and *Omega*, the first and last, the Rev. 1. 11. Image of the invisible God, the First-born of Col. 1. 15. every Creature, whose name is called the Isa. 9. 6. Wonderfull, the Counseller, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, and the Prince of Peace; appearing to his holy Apostle, walking in the midst of seven Golden Candlesticks, the lively Image and Representation of the several parcels of his Church, and of his Gospel, the true Lamp of this Spiritual Sanctuary, *Having in his right hand seven Stars.* Which words, though they set forth and represent to our Understanding at first sight, the *Idea* of a Mystical sense, yet will make it appear as clear and bright, as the things it is borrowed from, if in the handling of them

you

you will be pleased to consider and examine with me;

First, What is meant by the Stars, and why they are so called:

And secondly, Why, and how they are said to be in the right hand of Christ: *and he had in his right hand seven Stars.*

For the First. As the words are spoken Mystically, and not Literally, we are not to conceive the Lord Jesus as really holding in his right hand seven of those Celestial lights from Bodies which commonly we call Stars; for he might not have appeared on Earth with them, for many Reasons, but chiefly for this, That, if we do believe Astronomers, the least Star is Eighteen times bigger than the whole Earth; therefore we may safely conclude this Vision of St. *John* to have been nothing else but an Ænigmatical and Mystical Representation of the Ministers Calling (I mean a Lawfull Calling) to be of Christ, of his special care of them, and of the Obedience, men over whom they Rule, are to yield to their wholesom words and Doctrine, as being the saving words of him who is called the Sun of Righteousness, and by whose divine light they see and receive light; as the Prophet Pſal. 36.9. *David* saith, that others may be cheared up by their borrowed light, in the Spiritual darkness

neſs of this World, as men in the Natural darkneſs are comforted by the light the Stars receive and have from the material Sun.

In Holy Scripture, thoſe things are called Stars, which have an outward glory, dignity, and ſplendor. So *David*'s Kingdom is called a Star, even by *Balaam* in the Book of *Numbers*, chap. 24. verſ. 17. *There ſhall come a Star out of Jacob, and a Scepter ſhall riſe out of Iſrael.* Numb. 24. 17.

And in the Prophet *Iſaiah*, chap. 14. verſ. 12. the Kingdom of *Babylon* is called a Morning-Star; *How*, ſaith he, *art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer ſon of the morning?* Iſa. 14. 12.

And in the Book of *Geneſis*, chap. 37. verſ. 10. the Sun, and the Moon, and the Eleven Stars, in *Joſeph*'s Dream, are interpreted by *Jacob*, to be *Joſeph*'s Father, Mother, and Brethren.

But in our Text, the ſeven Stars in the right hand of our Lord and Bleſſed Redeemer Jeſus Chriſt, do repreſent the ſeven Angels of the ſeven Churches of *Aſia* the Leſs, as Chriſt witneſſeth himſelf in the laſt verſe of this Chapter, and in them, the whole Body of all the Miniſters of Chriſt, and Preachers of his Goſpel. Which Interpretation if any man thinks to be too honourable and too high for the Miniſters of the Church of Chriſt, becauſe the Apoſtle, in the ſecond Epiſtle to

the *Corinthians*, chap. 4. verſ. 5. ſpeaking in his own name, and of all other Miniſters, ſaith, *we our ſelves are your ſervants for Jeſus ſake.* And in the laſt verſe of the firſt Chapter of the ſame Epiſtle, *we have no dominion over your faith, but are helpers of your joy*: I would have him to reflect upon the glorious Titles the Holy Scripture attributes to theſe Servants of Chriſt and of his Church, for they are called Angels, as well as Stars, in the three firſt Chapters of this *Revelation.*

2 Cor. 4. 5.

In the firſt Epiſtle to the *Corinthians*, chap. 4. verſ. 1. they are to be accounted of all, as the Miniſters of Chriſt, and the Stewards of the Myſteries of God; in other places they are called the Ambaſſadors of Chriſt, and Co-workers with God.

1 Cor. 4. 1.

In the Goſpel of St. *Matthew*, chap. 5. verſ. 13, 14. they are ſaid to be the Light of the World, and the Salt of the Earth, becauſe they are in the hands of Chriſt, not only as lightſom Stars, but as an excellent Salt, to keep from Spiritual corruption, thoſe that embrace and believe the Goſpel.

Mat. 5. 13, 14.

And in the ſame Goſpel, *chap. 10. verſ. 40.* their Bleſſed Maſter ſhews, what account he makes of them, when he telleth them, *He that receives you receives me, and he that receives me receives him that ſent me.*

Mat. 10. 40.

And in the ſame Chapter of St. *Luke*, verſ. 16.

verſ. 16. *He that heareth you heareth me, and he that deſpiſeth you, deſpiſeth me; and he that deſpiſeth me, deſpiſeth him that ſent me.* Luke 10. 16.

Theſe be Witneſſes enough, to vindicate the Excellency of our Holy Function; but yet give me leave to add one word more, to prove that the Miniſters of the Church are called Stars, in the ſame ſenſe the Church is called the Hoſt, and the Kingdom of Heaven.

In the Prophet *Daniel*, chap. 8. verſ. 10. the prophanation of the Sanctuary of the Lord, by *Antiochus*, and his Cruelty to the Church of God and her Prieſts, is ſet down in theſe very words, *And it waxed great*, (that is, the little Horn ſpoken of in the ninth Verſe,) *even to the hoſt of heaven; and it caſt down ſome of the hoſt, and of the ſtars, to the ground, and ſtamped upon them.* Dan. 8. 10.

In the eighth Chapter, and the tenth Verſe of this *Revelation* of St. *John*, *When the third Angel ſounded, there fell a great ſtar from heaven, burning as it were a lamp*; where the word *Heaven* is taken for the Church, and by this Star that fell down from it, is meant a Doctor or Biſhop of great Honour, and outward Glory, (I need not tell you whom it relates to, you know it well enough,) who forſaking the purity of the Goſpel, and the wholeſom and ſaving Doctrine thereof, that is, revolting and falling from the true Faith, will give heed Rev. 8. 10.

to seducing Spirits and doctrines of Devils, as St. *Paul* saith to *Timothy*. 1. *Tim.* chap. 4. vers. 1.

And at the twelfth Verse, *when the fourth Angel sounded, the third part of the Sun was smitten, and the third part of the Moon, and the third part of the Stars:* By the third part of the Sun is represented the Doctrine of the Gospel, and the saving knowledge of God, and of his Son Jesus Christ, by the Moon, the true Church, and by the Stars, the Ministers thereof, as most part of Learned Interpreters acknowledge.

Thus you see, that not only in our Text, but in many other places of Scripture, the Holy Spirit of God is pleased to honour the Ministers and Servants of Christ with this glorious Title, intending, doubtless, by it to curb and restrain the sawcineſs and malice of this wicked Generation, who despising their comfortable Influences, and calling their Light Darkness, doth look upon them, and account of them, as of so many Blazing Stars, that portend nothing but Ruine and Destruction.

Now they are so called, because in their Ordination they are created, if I may so speak, that is, set apart and consecrated for the Ministry of the Word in the Church of God, which is as a new Heaven, or, if you will have me to express my self in the words of Christ, the new *Jerusalem*, which cometh down

out

out of Heaven from God) for the very ſame ends and purpoſes, the Stars at firſt were created and ſituated in the Firmament. Which if we conſider a little, will make good the ſecond Branch of my firſt Part, *why they are called Stars?* Which I think to be, becauſe of the many Reſemblances they have one with another. Rev. 3. 12.

For Firſt, The Stars, you know, are thought to be of the ſame Subſtance and Matter the Heavens are, but more thick and lightſom: So the Miniſters of the Church are of the ſame Nature and Subſtance all the other Members of the Church are; and yet are not to be eſteemed the worſe for it, no more than the Stars for being of the ſame Subſtance the Heavens are of. Nay, I ſay it is their Glory it is ſo, for by it they better reſemble their Lord and Maſter, who being our High-Prieſt, and the Everlaſting Son of the Father, yet called himſelf the Son of Man; and though he be the true Morning-Star, as he ſaith himſelf, *Rev.* 2. 28. nay the true God, yet took upon him the form of a Servant. Phil. 2. 7.

Secondly, As the Stars do both lighten and quicken all Inferiour things, by their Light and Influences, are as the Eyes of the World, and more bright and ſplendid than other parts of the Heavens: So the Miniſters of the Church are the light of the World, and by

their Doctrine, Life, and Example, are to ſhine in the midſt of a Crooked generation as Lights in the World, as they have a ſpecial Command in the Epiſtle to the *Philippians*, chap. 2. verſ. 15.

Thirdly, As the Stars brightneſs and light ſhines more gloriouſly in the night than in the day time, and darts out more vigorous Beams, in a cold, dry, froſty Night, than when the Air drops the Dew upon the face of the Earth: So the Miniſters of Chriſt are bound to cauſe their Faith, and Knowledge of the Truth, to ſhine and ſparkle, with more luſtre and radiancy, in the Night of Ignorance, and againſt the darkneſs and confuſions of Hereticks, and diſturbers of the Peace of the Church, than when ſhe enjoyeth the Spiritual Dew of Tranquillity and Peace.

Fourthly, The Stars are the Guide and direction of Travellers, and eſpecially of Sea-men: The Miniſters of Chriſt likewiſe, by their godly Inſtructions, do guide and direct men in the ways of Truth and Holineſs, and he that Rules both Sun, Moon, and Stars, is pleaſed to uſe
Pſal. 107. 30. their Miniſtry, to the bringing of them unto their deſired Haven.

Fifthly, Every Star hath its own degree of Virtue and Light, for *One ſtar differs from another ſtar in glory*, ſaith St. *Paul*, 1 *Cor.* 15. 41. though their Light is derived from the ſame principle:

principle: So every Miniſter of the Goſpel hath his own proper Gift, and though there are diverſities of Gifts, yet there is but the ſame Spirit, as the ſame Apoſtle witneſſeth in *chap.* 12. *verſ.* 4. of the ſame Epiſtle.

Sixthly, The Stars have every one their place, order, and ſituation, and keep it inviolably, without mixing together confuſedly; having been ordained of God, to keep their ſeveral Ranks and Courſes; So every one that hath the priviledge to be called to the Spiritual Prieſthood of the Church of Chriſt, as *Aaron* was to the Prieſthood of the Law, muſt have a ſpecial care of the Place and Rank God hath appointed unto him, and not meddle with, nor trouble the Order and Place of others; leſt they incurr ſuch a cenſure as God gave againſt falſe Prophets in the Prophet *Jeremy*'s time, *I ſent them not, neither have I commanded them, neither ſpake unto them.* Jer. *chap.* 14. *verſ.* 14. Pſal. 8. 3. Heb. 5. 4.

Seventhly, The Stars are not the Light, but only burning and gliſtering Lamps: So the Miniſters of Chriſt are only burning Lamps, and Witneſſes of the Light, in the Sanctuary of the Lord; and not properly the Light it ſelf; as it is ſaid of St. *John* the Baptiſt, *He was not that light, but was ſent to bear witneſs of that light.* Joh. *chap.* 1. *verſ.* 8.

Eighthly, The Stars have no power or influence upon Superiour and Nobler things, as the

the Soul, Mind, and Will of man: The Ministers likewise, have not of themselves the strength and power to change and convert the Souls of men; it is the proper work of God, and his own prerogative.

Ninthly, There have been Stars seen in Heaven, at several times, which never appeared before or after, as that which appeared to the Wise-men, at the Birth of our Saviour, *Mat.* 2. another in the year 1572. that caused a general admiration all the World over: And so hath God caused many extraordinary Stars, that is, Ministers and Witnesses of his Truth, to appear at several times in the Church, for the special setting forth of the Truth of Christ, and convincing the World, and the Church; that though many false Teachers, disturbers of the Peace and Tranquillity of this New *Jerusalem*, pretend to be the only Stars of this Spiritual Firmament; yet are they nothing else but Airy impressions and apparitions, who like Blazing-Stars, leave nothing behind them, and infect the World with nothing else but corrupt and stinking Influences.

Now as in all these particulars, Ministers are fitly compared to Stars; so there are many others wherein they do differ one from another.

As First, The Heavens cannot be deprived of the Stars: But the Church may be deprived of faithful Ministers, by the fury and malice of

of Satan and the World, but especially by the Craft and Ambition of such false Brethren and Teachers, who under pretence of Purity and Reformation, bring in Anarchy and Confusion, and cause this Spouse of Christ to groan and lament, as once the Old Church of the Jews; *we see not our signs, there is no more any Prophet, neither is there among us any that knoweth how long.* Psal. 74. 9. As it was our Case not many years ago.

Secondly, It is an Opinion generally received, that the Stars do follow the motion of their Orbs: But it must not be so with Ministers, else would we soon see bad work in the Church, as by our late sad and lamentable Experience it is too too evident.

Thirdly, The Stars shall lose their Light, and fall from Heaven at the last day, as Christ saith, *Matth.* 24. 29. *The Sun shall be darkned, and the Moon shall not give her light, and the Stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of heaven shall be shaken*: But for the true and faithful Ministers of Christ and his Church, *They shall shine as the brightness of the Firmament, and they that turn many to Righteousness, as the Stars for ever and ever*; as you may see *Dan.* chap. 12. vers. 3. And then that excellent word of *David* shall be fulfilled in them, *At thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore.* Psal. 16. 11. Matth. 24. 29.

And because even in this life the Mysti-

cal

cal Stars, receive from the Myſtical Sun of Righteouſneſs Light, Honour, and Protection, therefore are they ſaid to be in his Right Hand: *And he had in his right hand ſeven Stars.* Which leads me to my Second Obſervation on the Text, Why and how they are ſaid to be in the Right Hand of the Lord Jeſus?

Now our reflecting upon the following Obſervations, will give light and evidence to the *Quære.*

For the Firſt, They are ſaid to be in his Right Hand, becauſe they are in his own power and diſpoſing, and receive every one from him Grace, according to the meaſure of his Gift. *Phil.* 4. 7. 'Tis in Mercy and Love he is pleaſed to ſend them unto men, to help them forward in the ways of Salvation, 'tis an effect and fruit of his being on high at the right hand of the Father. *When he aſcended he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men*; for he gave ſome Apoſtles, and ſome Prophets, and ſome Evangeliſts, and ſome Paſtors and Teachers, for the perfecting of the Saints, for the work of the Miniſtry, and for the edifying of the Body of Chriſt, *'Till we all come, in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God,* as St. *Paul* ſaith in the ſame Epiſtle, the ſame Chapter, verſ. 11, 12, 13.

Ephes. 4 8.

Secondly, They are ſaid to be in his Right Hand,

Hand, becauſe it is he, that in the performance of their Duty leads them by the aſſiſting Grace of his Spirit, and giveth power and efficacy to their Words, dealing with them as with his Prophets *Eſay* and *Jeremy*, when he cauſed one of the Seraphims to touch *Eſay*'s lips with a live Coal taken from off the Altar, *Iſa.* 6. 6. and when he put forth his hand, and touched his mouth, ſaying, *Behold I have put my words in thy mouth.* Jer. *chap.* 1. *verſ.* 9.

Thirdly, They are ſaid to be in his right hand, becauſe he loveth and cheriſheth them, above all other things, as we do thoſe things we have in our hands, and are dear unto us. For though they be his Servants, yet he calls them his Friends, and ſaith unto them as he ſaid to his Servants of old; *Thou ſhalt be a crown of glory in the hands of the Lord, and a royal diadem in the hand of thy God.* Iſa. 62. 3.

In the Fourth place, They are ſaid to be in his right hand, becauſe the Lord's protection and care of them is wonderful, his Eyes and his Heart is continually upon them, as he ſaid of the Temple of *Jeruſalem*; and in their Spiritual War, againſt the World, Satan, Hereſie, and Errour, he is preſent with them, though inviſibly, as the Captain of the Hoſt of the Lord, as he was with *Joſhua*, and the whole Camp of *Iſrael*, before *Jericho*, as you may ſee in the Book of *Joſhua*, chap. 5. verſ. 14.

Fifthly, Because he is always at hand to comfort and keep them, against their Enemies; and if their Malice and Oppression reduceth them to good King *Jehoshaphat* his Case, we know not whither to turn our Eyes for help; or with the Church, in *Isaiah*, chap. 49. verf. 14. to complain, and say, *The Lord hath forsaken us*, and, *Our God hath forgotten us*; then speaks he unto them, as to his Church and Servants in those days, *I have you graven upon the palms of my hands*, verf. 16. Thus did he protect with his right hand *Moses* against the fury of *Pharaoh*, the contempt and rebellion of the People; *Jeremy* and *Baruch*, against the Decree of *Jehoiakim*. Jer. 36. 26. the Prophet *Elias* against the rage of *Ahab*, and *Jesabel*; and St. *Paul* from many dangers and deaths. 2 *Cor.* 1. 10.

To these we may add, that by their being in the right hand of God or Christ may be understood, that they are in favour with Christ, that he honoureth them, and will at last, for a merciful Recompence of their Labours, make them partakers of the Glory he hath received of the Father; and that he promiseth them, *Rev.* 3. 21. *To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne.*

But Lastly, I think they may be said to be in the right hand of Christ in another sense, that

that is, that he may throw them down from the Firmament of the Church, if they turn from the Holy Commandments delivered unto them. 2 *Pet.* 2. 21. For whereas every private Christian is commanded to work out his Salvation with fear and trembling; Ministers have a double Charge, to Save themselves, and others, by being Faithful to their Trust, and fulfilling the Work their Master hath entrusted them withall; lest he being angry, shakes them out of his right hand, as men use to throw off those things that displease them, though they have been never so dear to them before. And thus did God formerly deal with *Nadab* and *Abihu*, the Sons of *Aaron*, for Offering strange Fire before the Lord, which he commanded them not; *And there went out a fire from the Lord and devoured them, and they dyed before the Lord; who will be sanctified in them that come nigh him, and before all the people will he be glorified*: as *Moses* said after their Sin and Punishment, *Levit.* 10. 2.

And thus did he deal with the two Sons of *Ely*, in the First of *Samuel*, chap. 4. verf. 11. And so in few words have I cleared the matter in hand.

Now from these few particular Observations, the House of *Aaron* and the House of *Israel* may learn these Lessons of Instruction and Comfort.

And First, You the Tribe of *Levi*, the

Messengers of the Lord of Hosts, learn to be Faithful, Careful and Diligent in your Master's Work, and in the Duties of your Sacred Calling; lest as unprofitable Servants he throws you off from his Right Hand, and upbraids you as the Priests formerly in the days of *Malachy*, *You are departed out of the way, ye have caused many to stumble at the Law, and you have corrupted the covenant of Levi: Therefore have I made you contemptible and base, before all the people; according as you have not kept my ways, but have been partial in the law.* Malach. 2. 7, 8, 9. But what do I say? God forbid this Censure should ever concern us; let us rather say of it, as *Daniel* to the King of *Babylon*, concerning his Dream, Let it be to them that hate us, and the Interpretation thereof to the Enemies of Christ, and the Disturbers of the Peace of his Church. *Dan.* 4. 19.

Secondly, Let it be your Joy and Comfort, to be like the Prophets and Apostles of the Lord, and as they were, to be Defamed, and made as the filth of the World, and the off-scouring of all things, as St. *Paul* complains, 1. *Cor.* 4. 13. since you are burning and lightsom Stars in the hands of our Lord Jesus. Let me say to you, what St. *Paul* to the *Colossians*, chap. 4. vers. 17. said to their Minister, *Take heed to the ministry which you have received of the Lord, that ye fulfill it.* Go on boldly in the Work of your Master, for

you

you are as so many Stars in his Right Hand, whom neither life nor death shall ever pluck out of his Hand. For if the Shepherd be better and nobler than the Sheep, then may you particularly apply to your selves that Excellent Promise of Christ, *Joh.* 10. 28. *I give unto them eternal life, they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand.*

'Tis true, there are now-a-days many false Stars, wandring Stars, as St. *Jude* calls them, *Jude* 9. 14. who (as the Bramble would have been King over all the other Trees, *Judg.* 9. 14.) pretend to be the only Stars in the Hands of Christ; and perswade a Crooked Nation, Our Church is as the *Chaos* in the Beginning, and that there is nothing but Darkness upon the Face of it, *Gen.* 1. 2. Ye therefore, (as the Lord said to *Jeremy*, Jer. 1. 17.) gird up your Loyns, and arise, and speak unto them all that the Lord commands you: Be not dismayed at their Faces, for behold he hath made you a Defenced City, and an Iron Pillar, and a Brazen Wall, against the whole Land. And they shall fight against you, but they shall not prevail against you, for the Lord is with you, to deliver you.

Come now, O House of *Israel!* and learn, That if these be the Priviledges of your Ministers, if they are Stars in the Hand of your Blessed Saviour, to receive them therefore in the

the Lord with all gladness, as St. *Paul* commanded the *Philippians* to receive *Timothy*, Phil. 2. 29. And as he exhorted to the *Hebrews*; *Remember them which have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the word of God; whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation.* Heb. 13. 7. And at *vers.* 17. *Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit your selves; For they watch for your souls, as they that must give an account; that they may do it with joy, and not with grief, for that is unprofitable for you.* Pray for them, pray for your selves, that God may be pleased to fill in your Souls, by their Ministry, the sweet Influences of Grace and Mercy in Christ, in whose right hand they are as so many Stars.

To conclude, my truly Reverend and Beloved Brethren in the Lord, seeing there are in our days so many False and Wandring Stars, who that they may with more facility lead men in the ways of their own devising, pretend to be as it is said of *Simon*, Acts 8. 10. the great power of God, and the only *Joshua*, appointed for the introducing of *Israel* into the Land of Promise. Let our Light shine more than ever, that all men may glorifie our Father which is in Heaven, when they shall see we lead them in the ways of Truth and Righteousness.

Let us all be like that Star which led the Wise-men to *Bethlehem*, let us point out and shew unto men the place where *Jesus* is to be found;

found; and to them, and to us, let the Lord Jesus give the Morning-Star, according to his promise. *Rev.* 2. 28.

And since *There is no enchantment against Jacob, neither is there any divination against Israel.* Num. 23. 23. let us as chosen of God and precious, though disallowed indeed of most men; let us, I say, so adorn our Holy Priesthood and Ministry, by a diligent care and watching over the Flock of Christ, that the *Balaams* of this time, which are hired to Curse us, may be compelled to cry out at last, as their Patron of old, *How goodly are thy tents O Jacob, and thy tabernacles O Israel!* Num. 24. 5.

Which that we may all see, to our Eternal Comfort, let us beg of the Sun of Righteousness, Jesus Christ our Lord; that he may be pleased to dart upon us, the Stars in his right hand, the wholesom Beams of Grace, and Understanding, and Zeal to his Glory, and the Good of his Church; that when we shall have made an end of Trafficking with the Talents he hath bestowed on us, and having given him a good and faithful Account, we may all hear that Blessed and Comfortable word, Well done good and faithful Servants, enter into the joy of your Lord. You have been as so many Stars in my right hand, whose Beams in the work of your Ministry have been darkned by many a Cloud of the Sins

Malach. 4. 2.

Sins and Errours of a ſtiff-necked Generation, but now I the Sun of Righteouſneſs will dart Eternally upon you the ſweet and ravishing Beams of Glory in my Glorious and Everlaſting Sanctuary. To Him, with the Father, and Ever-bleſſed Spirit, be aſcribed all Honour, Power, and Glory, now and for evermore. *Amen.*

FINIS.